

Birds in west central Libya, 1980-81

by P. J. Cowan

Received 3 August 1981

Bundy (1976) reviewed the literature concerning records of birds in Libya and grouped records into 4 regions delineated by 30°N and 19°E. Published papers listing birds seen in the "Fezzan" region (south of 30°N, west of 19°E) are few. The present paper reports observations of mine made from 15 Sep 1980 to 19 June 1981 at Brak and other localities (Fig. 1) in Bundy's Fezzan.

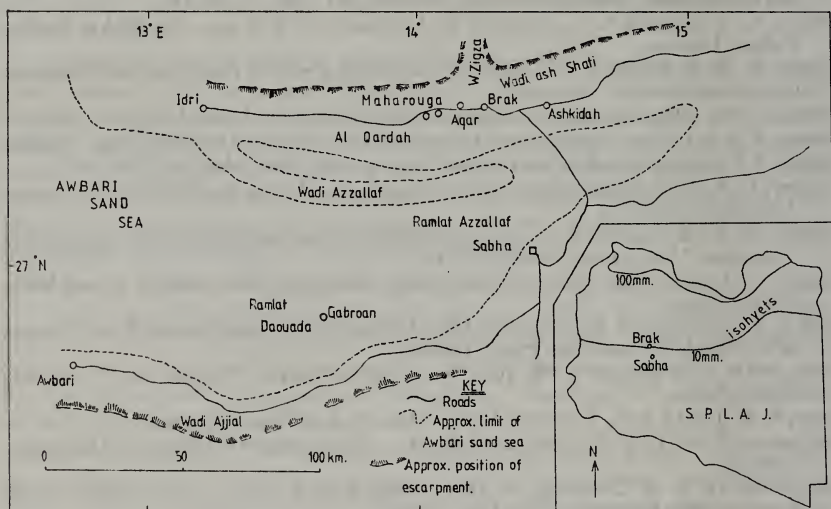


Fig. 1. Map showing Brak and other localities in west central Libya.

The Wadi ash Shati is to the north of an arm of the Awbari Sandsea and contains, amongst others, the settlements of Idri, Maharouga, Brak and Ashkidah. The towns of Awbari and Sabha are in the Wadi Ajjial. Ramlats Azzallaf and Daouada are constituent sandseas in the Awbari Sandsea.

The vicinity of Brak includes palmerie, ditches, dunes, escarpment, stony desert, wadi, part of a giant agricultural project (arable), pools and a stream which is presumably maintained by agricultural drainage. The agricultural project reaches Ashkidah. There are pools at Ashkidah and Maharouga. The vicinity of Sabha includes a lake and a pool. I did not locate the lake at Sabha studied by Erard & Larigauderie (1972), if it still exists. The Ramlat Daouada contains a number of lakes including Gabroan with its associated village.

Observations were mainly made on walks in the vicinity of Brak. All of the places shown in Fig. 1 were visited at least once, except Wadi Azzallaf. In the following list, Bundy's (1976) sequence of species and species check-list number are used for convenience. I also list those species seen by myself,

of each of which the Fezzan status appears reasonably certain on the basis of Bundy's (1976) review and which is not contradicted by my records. As far as possible, spellings of place names in this paper are those of the National Atlas (1978). Bundy's (1976) system of spelling place names was somewhat different, Sabha, Awbari and Idri were spelt Sebha, Oubari, Edri. Throughout the present paper "Fezzan" is used as defined by Bundy (1976).

18. *Egretta garzetta* Little Egret. Maximum seen, c.25 on 26 Sep at Brak. Previously in autumn apparently only singles recorded. Also at Brak, singles 30 Dec and 18 Jan, the first winter records for the Fezzan.

33. *Anas querquedula* Garganey. 6 at Sabha, 27 Mar and 5 there 9 Apr. The first spring records for the Fezzan.

54. *Buteo buteo* Buzzard. Records of a dark-plumage "probable", 8 Nov—3 Mar at Brak. No previous Fezzan records.

57. *Circus gallicus* Short-toed Eagle. One on 30 May, 1 June and 5 June at Brak. The first definite records for the Fezzan.

58. *Circus aeruginosus* Marsh Harrier. Singles on 6 dates, 17 Oct–14 Nov, also singles 26 Dec and 1 June, all at Brak. 2 at Sabha, 27 Mar and one there 9 Apr. 2 unidentified harriers at Brak, 29 Nov and one there 27 Dec. No previous Fezzan records of harriers Nov, Dec or June.

87. *Fulica atra* Coot. Several at Sabha, 27 Mar and 4 there 9 Apr. The first spring Fezzan records.

88. *Gallinula chloropus* Moorhen. Noted on 9 dates at Brak. In Fezzan a breeding colony has previously been recorded at Sabha so is possibly also resident at Brak.

92. *Rallus aquaticus* Water Rail. One at Brak, 25 Feb. Previously singles on 3 dates in Fezzan, all in April.

103. *Vanellus vanellus* Lapwing. 13 on 16 Dec, 2 on 27 Dec and one on 12 Jan at Brak. The first inland records.

116. *Limosa limosa* Black-tailed Godwit. One at Sabha, 27 Mar. The second record for the Fezzan.

127. *Tringa ochropus* Green Sandpiper. Noted at Brak on 2 dates in Sep, 3 in Oct, 3 in Nov, 3 in Dec, 4 in Jan, 3 in Feb, 5 in Mar and 2 in Apr. Usually 1-2, but 3 and 5 respectively on 2 dates in Oct. Also spring records (3 dates) from Sabha. The winter records are the first for the Fezzan.

129. *Tringa totanus* Redshank. 11 at Sabha, 27 Mar and c. 10 on 9 Apr. Previous Fezzan records are of only 1-2 per day.

130. *Himantopus himantopus* Black-winged Stilt. 9 at Sabha, 27 Mar and one 9 Apr. 17 at Ashkidah, 30 Mar and 2 at Brak, 30 Apr. Previous Fezzan, maximum, 2 birds on any one day.

147. *Larus ridibundus* Black-headed Gull. 2 at Brak, 25 Jan. 16 at Sabha, 27 Mar and 7 there 9 Apr. One unidentified gull at Brak, 26 Dec and 28 Jan, and 2 there 28 Apr. First records of any gull in the Fezzan.

164. *Streptopelia senegalensis* Palm Dove. Several at Maharouga, 7 Mar. 4 at Brak, 25 Apr. First records for the Fezzan.

169. *Asio flammeus* Short-eared Owl. One at Brak, 3 Oct. Second autumn record for the Fezzan.

173. *Caprimulgus aegyptius* Egyptian Nightjar. 4 at Brak, 23 Oct and 2 on 6 Nov. First Fezzan records.

180. *Alcedo atthis* Kingfisher. Singles at Brak, 20 Nov, 30 Dec, 12 Jan and 21 Feb. First Fezzan records.

207. *Riparia riparia* Sand Martin. One at Brak, 8 and 27 Oct. First autumn records for Fezzan, usually Mar-May.

215. *Motacilla cinerea* Grey Wagtail. One at Brak, 6 Nov. Singles only on 3 previous dates in Fezzan.

251. *Sylvia cantillans* Subalpine Warbler. At Brak, 2 on 12 Jan, 5 on 27 Jan, 3 on 19 Feb. 1-2 also seen on 2 dates in each of Mar, Apr (Brak) and Oct (Wadi Zigza). Only one previous winter record for Fezzan.

256. *Sylvia hortensis* Orphean Warbler. One at Brak, 15 Apr. Third Fezzan record.

258. *Sylvia nana* Desert Warbler. One at Brak, 26 Sep. First recorded occurrence in Fezzan outside the southwest.

282. *Saxicola rubetra* Whinchat. Singles at Brak, 22, 27, 29 Sep, 3 and 5 Oct. 1-2 recorded on 5 dates in spring. No previous autumn records for the Fezzan.

283. *Saxicola torquata* Stonechat. One at Brak, 15 Nov. Second record for the Fezzan.

288. *Turdus torquatus* Ring Ouzel. One at Brak, 1 Mar. Second Fezzan record.

297. *Acanthis cannabina* Linnet. About 30 at Brak, 26 Dec. Two previous records, of flocks, in Fezzan.

304. *Rhodopechys githaginea* Trumpeter Finch. 2 at Brak, 25 Feb, 2 and 3 Apr, 11 June. Bundy (1976) comments that there are surprisingly few records for the Fezzan.

307. *Passer hispaniolensis* Spanish Sparrow. Noted 6 Nov-23 Mar at Brak, the largest number recorded being c.1000 on 6 and 8 Nov. Previously not recorded in Fezzan in winter before Jan.

Also recorded:—12. *Ardea cinerea*, 13. *Ardea purpurea*, 14. *Ardeola ralloides*, 20. *Nycticorax nycticorax*, 24. *Plegadis falcinellus*, 26. *Anas acuta*, 56. *Buteo rufinus* (a probable), 60. *Circus macrourus*, 71. *Falco biarmicus*, 80. *Falco tinnunculus*, 97. *Charadrius dubius*, 110. *Calidris minuta*, 112. *Gallinago gallinago*, 121. *Philomachus pugnax*, 125. *Tringa hypoleucos*, 126. *Tringa nebularia*, 165. *Streptopelia turtur*, 172. *Otus scops*, 181. *Merops apiaster*, 186. *Upupa epops*, 188. *Alaemon alaudipes*, 191. *Ammomanes deserti*, 202. *Delichon urbica*, 204. *Hirundo obsoleta*, 206. *Hirundo rustica*, 208. *Anthus campestris*, 209. *Anthus cervinus*, 214. *Motacilla alba*, 216. *Motacilla flava*, 218. *Lanius excubitor*, 221. *Lanius senator*, 225/226. *Ficedula albicollis*|*semitorquata*|*hypoleuca* (unseparated), 228. *Muscicapa striata*, 230. *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*, 243/246. *Phylloscopus*

collybita/trochilus (unseparated), 245. *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*, 250. *Sylvia borin*, 257. *Sylvia melanocephala*, 262. *Turdoides fulvus*, 273. *Oenanthe leucopyga*, 277. *Oenanthe oenanthe*, 308. *Passer simplex*, 317. *Corvus ruficollis*.

References:

- Bundy, G. 1976. *The Birds of Libya*. British Ornithologists' Union: London.
 Erard, C. & Larigauderie, F. 1972. Migration pré-nuptiale dans l'ouest de la Libye. *Oiseau Rev. Fr. Orn.* 42: 81-169, 253-284.
 National Atlas of the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. 1978. Surveying Department, Secretariat of Planning, Tripoli. Arabic/English edition.

Address: Dr. P. J. Cowan, Higher Institute of Technology, Brak, Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.

© British Ornithologists' Club 1982.

On the status of the Green Pheasant

by Derek Goodwin

Received 5 August 1981

The Green Pheasant of Japan was formerly considered a subspecies of the Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus* (e.g. Peters 1934). Later (Delacour 1951, 1977, Schwartz & Schwartz 1951, Cramp *et al.* 1980) it was treated as a distinct species, *Phasianus versicolor*.

I recently had occasion to examine the large series of skins of *Phasianus* in the British Museum (Natural History) collection, which includes representatives of all the major groups of subspecies. As a result I believe that *versicolor* is best treated as a subspecies of *P. colchicus*, unless the mainland forms are to be split up into at least 3 different species, a course I do not advocate.

Three subspecies of *P. colchicus* are currently recognised from the Japanese islands, *versicolor*, *robustipes* and *tanensis*. They show only slight differences and 2 of them, *versicolor* and *robustipes*, intergrade. For the present purpose (and possibly for most other purposes too) they can best be, and here will be, all included under the name *versicolor*.

Delacour (1977) treats all the mainland forms as subspecies of *P. colchicus* and shows that they can be divided into 4 or possibly 5 main groups which differ most consistently from each other in the colour of their wing coverts (predominantly brown, white or bluish grey) and their lower backs and rumps (predominantly reddish brown, yellowish olive-green, or a silvery bluish green). As Delacour (1977), who has had extensive experience with these and other pheasants in captivity, points out, there are no known differences of voice or behaviour between any of the forms of *Phasianus*, they all interbreed freely if brought together (even at liberty) by human agency, and their hybrid or mongrel offspring are fully fertile. Nevertheless he thought it was appropriate to give *versicolor* specific rank because of its male being "entirely green on mantle and underparts". He differentiated females of *versicolor* as having the "feathers of the mantle mostly black" as against all mainland forms having them "mostly brown".

Schwartz & Schwartz (1951), in a study of *Phasianus* on Hawaii, where the Chinese Ring-necked Pheasant *P. colchicus torquatus*, the Mongolian Pheasant *P. c. mongolicus* and the Green Pheasant *P. (c.) versicolor* were known to have